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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PRT/KUNDUZ ? TAKHAR GOVERNOR ASKS FOR  
ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS FOR FARMERS

1. (SBU) Summary: During a meeting with PRTOff, the Governor of Takhar made his usual requests for increased international assistance to Takhar Province, particularly on road construction and alternative livelihoods (AL). The Governor's claims of neglect of his province were disingenuous given ongoing AL programs. The meeting also revealed the Governor's lack of interest in consulting with the Takhar Provincial Council. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On January 16, military and civilian members of the Kunduz PRT met with the Governor of Takhar, Khwaja Khaussuddin Abu Bakr, and seven members of the Takhar Provincial Council (PC). The meeting was held to introduce to the PC the various development and reconstruction projects the PRT, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (MECD), and USAID have completed or that are currently under construction. The PRT used this meeting as an opportunity to request the PC develop a priority list of projects and sectors that need development assistance during calendar year 2006.

Governor Claims Nobody likes Takhar  
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3. (SBU) Governor Abu Bakr began the meeting with his typical 30 minute mantra on the lack of investment in the province and lamented the number of projects needed. He claimed, as he has in all public meetings for the past six months, that Takhar is continually ignored by the international community and that investment is never commensurate with that in other provinces. Representatives from MECD and the U.S. PRTOff addressed the Governor's claims and read off a litany of projects that have been funded in Takhar over the last 2 years. German Ministry of Interior Police also reminded the Governor of the \$400,000 investment in Takhar's new provincial police HQ and in police stations in Kalafgan and Rustaq Districts during fiscal year 2005.

District Roads are Top Priority  
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4. (SBU) Construction of roads connecting the outlying districts to Taloqan remains the Governor's priority for future development. He asked specifically for connecting roads from Baharak to Dast-e Qala and from Chah Ab to Rustaq. He expressed frustration that all of the northern and northeastern districts were virtually cut off from the provincial capital due to the poor quality of the roads. As an alternative to road construction, the governor asked for road maintenance equipment, including graders and bulldozers. The governor claimed he had met with the PC and that he was speaking for them as well as himself; however, the female members of the PC dissented and stated that, although they agreed with the governor on the need for more roads, there might be other priorities they would like to develop, if given the opportunity. The PRT promised to come back and meet with the PC about their list of priorities.

Farmers Seek to Cultivate Poppy  
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5. (SBU) The Governor then unexpectedly raised the subject of poppy cultivation in Takhar Province, claiming that Takhar farmers have no choice economically but to turn to poppy cultivation, and asking for additional international assistance to Takhar. PRTOff pressed Abu Bakr to reveal information on cultivation rates for this planting year, but the Governor would not speculate. He simply reiterated the need for alternatives ? anything besides law

enforcement.

Comment

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16. (SBU) The Governor's cry for alternative livelihood investment was disingenuous at best, and primarily indicative of his inability to enforce the law by cracking down on drug trafficking and cultivation. PADCO, USAID's AL contractor for Badakhshan and Takhar Provinces, has committed to over 179,000 labor days of work on Takhar's canals through its Cash for Work (CFW) program and will employ over 16,000 day laborers between November 2005 and March 2006. PADCO had invested over \$200,000 in such CFW programs by the end of 2005 and plans to spend over \$950,000 by the end of March 2006. Moreover, the Governor sent a letter of commendation to PADCO officers thanking them for the outstanding work they are doing in the province.

17. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: In PRTOff's view, the economic plight of Takhar farmers is not the real problem in Takhar. The real problem is the drug traffickers that use Takhar as a super-highway, unimpeded by police. Historically, Takhar farmers have not relied on poppy proceeds as a primary source of income, and cultivation rates were among the lowest in the country. Although that amount increased (by 79 percent) last year to 1,300 hectares, it was still not an indicator of economic dependence on the crop. The problem the Governor faces is not an economic dependence on poppy, but a criminal problem with people now seeking illegal sources of income. While the international community remains committed to helping the Governor develop the security and economic sectors of society, the law must still be enforced.

18. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: The combined meeting showed an unfortunate relationship between the Governor and the PC. Abu Bakr was less than willing to share time with the PC members in attendance. He appeared to ignore their presence through most of the meeting, and resolutely stated that he spoke for them all with one voice. Such statements were clearly untrue when the female members of the council were separately asked for their comments on development priorities. The PC will need considerable attention and mentoring to form them into a working body with an integral role in provincial politics. PRT Kunduz is keen on meeting with the Provincial Council and helping empower them in their advisory role. END COMMENT.

NORLAND